

| Front Page | Edit Page | Other Page |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|
|---------------|--------------|---------------|

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Smearing Our Friends

Much good may be done by the Senate subcommittee on foreign aid expenditures in exposing and ending corruption in that field, perhaps especially in Vietnam. Still this subcommittee, headed by Senator Ernest Gruening of Alaska, hardly served a useful purpose when it broadcast anonymous charges against Vice President Ky of Vietnam as a corruptionist and opium smuggler.

The subcommittee, while releasing the information, declined to name or in any way identify the source of a story that Ky some time ago had been removed by the CIA as commanding officer of a secret sabotage operation because he used it as a front for opium smuggling. Now the U. S. Embassy in Saigon, speaking with authority, says that there is no truth in the story.

So extensive has been corruption in Vietnam that many Americans are prepared to believe almost any story about it. Still for a Senate subcommittee to smear the name of the vice president of the country with whom we are allied in desperate fighting by making public an anonymous report seems irresponsible, almost reprehensible.

We are all familiar with the practices of some congressional committees in pointing the finger of accusation at some citizens and public employes without proof. The extension of this practice to one of the highest officials of an allied country carries this ugly practice to a point of danger in this country's relations with its friends in international affairs.